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The language of violence

OC OC

I remember the Warlord now as clear as if it was yesterday.

Tall he was, proud. A leviathan of our species. Magnificent.

You think we Warrior Caste are brutes? Who value bulk and strength over all things? Don't be so judgemental. The Warlord was the best of us; larger yes, but faster and cunning. He was brilliant. He had earned his rank in the War against the Yebo. You should study that war.

Looking back it was our finest hour. HIS finest hour.

He earned his way up the ranks back then. From Regimental command to Division, to finally after the Battle of Guyar, to the rank of Warlord. He never lost a battle you know that? Not one. In all his time, he never lost a battle.

He didn't deserve what happened to him.

What? Alright. I will try to focus on the events you asked for. But I will never apologise for defending him. He was the best of us. He understood before any of us. You made him the one you could blame for your own mistakes and follies. Even the Warrior Caste turned on him. It was unjust. I believe that. I will never not believe it.

Fine. The events of the Battle of Scott Station.

Yes, I am aware of the political and diplomatic build up to the war. I was his Aide and Senior Adjunct. My role was to remain apprised of all the things he didn't need to focus on. Understand, the Warlord was proud to be a Warrior Caste. Centuries ago we agreed that only in The Union, could we as a species move forward. Warriors focus on our own. Make sure that if The Union calls upon us to act, we do so with intent and brilliance.

He employed me to keep an eye on events elsewhere. His world was one of unit preparedness; combat readiness; morale; logistics and supply. Having our armed forces ready to deploy in defence of The Union is all consuming. I was his eyes and ears. So YES, I was aware of the talks between us and the Humans. The negotiations. The demands.

I am not a Scholar Caste. I cannot comment on the failure of talks with the Humans. My job was to alert him to the fact that simply the talks had failed, the Humans had refused to accept our demands. As such a state of war between The Union and the Human Alliance was to exist from dawn on home-world that day.

He received the news with his usual stoic intensity. We had studied the humans from afar. We knew they had a long tradition of war, but they were half the size of even the runtiest Warrior Caste, and their technology was not superior to ours. We also knew their armed forces on the Planet Hycallia were at most a few regiments.

The Warlord understood that what was needed was not just a victory but an overwhelming one. This is why he insisted the entire Army of Umbra Twilight was transported to Hycallia. He understood what it would do. The Humans are warriors also. You Scholars do not grasp this- but violence is a language.

Save your judgements. You are too academic to understand. Violence is a language. A universal language. War is as well. Warriors, no matter what species they belong to, use violence to communicate; the Yebo understood. The Humans were an intelligent, warlike race. Their warriors would see a staggeringly large force of our Warriors able to assemble on a distant world within a single day of the war beginning. They would see the ferocity and speed of our initial attacks. It would be more than just a few opening engagements- it would be communication without words; the language of violence; the poetry of war.

We landed; six whole divisions of infantry, two warmachine battalions and a cohort of Leviathans. What? No, we did not have fleet support. We knew the Human Fleet was being kept around their home system to prevent our fleet attacking them but that meant they were bottled up behind our blockade. The Warlord saw we had a window to use this for our advantage- cultivate a ground war. Win swiftly. Present the victories to the Scholar Class and allow them to force the humans to abandon Hycallia.

Of course it was a 'sound policy' you judgemental little Scholar. I told you, the Warlord was brilliant.

Give me a moment. Do you have anything to drink?

Of course you don't.

The Demilitarized Zone between The Union and the Humans was on the fourth continent. Seven *G'Ruck* wide. A line on our maps. The Humans had one military base. Nine *G'Ruck* behind the DMZ. Scott Station. After that there was nothing for a good forty *G'Ruck*.

The Warlord's orders were simple. Cross the border, attack and take Scott Station. This was to be the opening salvo. After we took it, the Army was to divide into three separate thrusts, each forcing the humans to spread their forces elsewhere.

It was simple, yet it was brilliant. So like the Warlord.

The opening elements of our forces crossed the border while the Warlord was still organising the main body where we had landed on our side of the DMZ. Scar Leader HuckTra was trusted; he had served for a dozen years, and his Division, *The Rising*

Waters, had honours in over 30 battles in its long history. 7,000 of the finest of the Warrior Caste mounted upon Transports and crossing the human border.

We heard the explosions from the rally point. HuckTra soon communicated with us. Human minefields. How The Union had not noticed the humans fill the land behind the DMZ with so many mines still staggers me. You Scholars seemed surprised- but intelligence gathering was your job was it not?

Regardless, we discovered no path through. *The Rising Waters* had been stopped dead. The Warlord ordered the Engineering Battalion forward to clear a path ready for the main army to follow up.

We had almost gotten everyone ready when we got word of greater losses. The Engineer's had succeeded but the humans launched air units upon them. Obviously our Army had its own air units, but that's when we started getting reports of the superiority of the human flyers.

Their ships were smaller than ours, miniscule even; and while ours were as fast, theirs could do things... what? I mean they could maneuver like nothing our pilots had ever seen. We sent up a squadron to deal with the air units attacking our engineering units... and before we knew it half the air wing had been deployed. And we were losing.

This was when the Warlord decided he had to act fast. HuckTra was an inspired leader, but it was clear the humans had greater forces than we expected. Immediately he ordered Scar Leader TheclLav, to send two regiments of the Division of *Furious Fire* forward to support *The Rising Waters*. These were specialist anti-air units. The idea was to attack the human aircraft from ground as well as air.

It succeeded. The human pilots were truly skilled. They would perform impossible moves to avoid our missiles. But in time we brought down many of their aircraft. They withdrew. But the cost had been murderous. We had lost a third of our air wing, with more needing repair.

Still it had the desired effect. With no aircraft to attack them, our engineers made quick work of deep minefields, and created a Battalion sized hole in them. The remains of the *Rising Waters* surged through, with the now fully ready Divisions of *Furious Fire* and *Ferocious Intent* following up.

21,000 warriors now surging forwards.

That's when the ambushes started. The humans were dug it it seems. And well hidden. What? What do you mean 'we should have expected it'? The Warrior Caste depends upon intelligence from the Scholar Caste. We were told there was a single human regiment upon the whole planet. You told us this. Any failure in intelligence was on your hands not ours.

The first we knew? The humans began attacking, from well entrenched positions all around us. So many attacks. Precise snipers would target individual warriors with utter precision. Sudden explosive bursts of ferocious automatic weaponry would open fire from close range.

The Rising Waters would hold, regroup and attack. But each time the humans had escaped from their defensive holes. Or our warriors would zero in on one cunningly concealed position and then be attacked by another nearby.

It was soon after that we realised the humans had created a Killing Zone for us. To get to Scott Station we would have to pay a blood price.

Understand we Warrior Caste NEVER throw away lives for no good reason. Ever. But we also understand a blood price. We have no fear of paying it. The Warlord asked Scar Leader HuckTra if he understood what was required, he said he did. The honour of the *Rising Water's* was at stake. They would not shirk from it.

The whole division surged forward. It was bloody work. Ambush after ambush; sniper after sniper. Still they surged forward. The name *Rising Waters*, it was a ferocious name. Like actual Rising Waters they stop at nothing, driven by clear intent.

Within only a *De'Kulla*, we had advanced a full three *G'Ruck*. Mostly on foot. Then I think it was the 11th Company; they had been on the right and discovered a region without ambushes. It was covered by more landmines. Scar Leader HuckTra saw it for what it was- an area they had used mines on, not ambushes. No warriors. No hidden locations. He called up the engineers to clear it and the anti-air units to cover them. He hoped the 11th Company had discovered a weakness in the human defensive lines.

What happened?

The humans had laid mines a full half *G'Ruck* deep before this region, right across the area we were fighting in. But these were not detonated by proximity. Each one was dormant until the humans triggered them remotely. And they did. All at once. The explosion was... it was a deep sound. The mines had been buried deep so as to avoid detection, but each one had enough charge to take out an area big enough to kill a squad of Warriors.

What? Of course we had not checked! Our Warriors were encountering defensive position after defensive position.. They were fighting for their lives. We should have been TOLD the humans had placed so much ordinance into the region. All we had been told was that the only human activity near the DMZ had been farming droids. So do not demand why our forces had walked into such an ambush.

Understand- these mines were planted not only to be detonated remotely, but close to the humans own positions. If we had not destroyed them, their own mines would have. All that mattered to these humans was we had brought up a lot of Warriors into

land clearly intended to be destroyed and had positioned their own men to make it so we wouldn't suspect it.

Losses? From that detonation alone we lost 1,000 Warriors. Many thousand more injured. And the anti-air was gone AND the Engineering battalion had been wiped out. It was masterful. At once the human air fighters returned. The Warlord understood now. I could see it in his eyes. He understood what kind of battle the Humans would give us.

How? Don't you listen? Violence is a language. The humans were talking to us. Using warfare they were telling us things about them, about how they fought, how they thought. It's clear by your faces you don't grasp this, but we did. The Warlord did. I could see it in the way his eyes narrowed, and his breathing slowed. He was listening to what they were saying very carefully.

What? Scar Leader HuckTra had been standing directly on top of a deep mine when it had detonated. He was amidst the missing but we assumed he had been physically destroyed.

The Warlord's orders? What choice did he have? We had to press on. If we retreated it would have sent a message. *The Rising Waters* had been mauled, along with units of the Division of *Ferocious Intent*. We had to press on. So the other two divisions surged forward; the Warlord ordered up the entire remaining air wing to keep the Human Air Units busy and ordered a renewed attack to be unleashed.

At this point we discovered they had two types of air units. Fast interceptors and slow ground suppression craft. Our air wing was busy dealing with their fast craft. As our infantry moved forward their ground suppression units began to interdict our forces. Our forward units came under fire from foes out of range of our infantry. We moved up as many anti-air as we could and the Warlord brought forward both the Division of *Cold Murder* and then unleashed the Leviathan's.

Humans had nothing that could match such war machines. The height of twenty Warrior Caste stood on top of each other, armed with six dozen guns and armour plating able to withstand nuclear weaponry. They moved swiftly to the front line and began to punch a hole through the human defences.

Yes, we noticed the humans had nothing to stop them but you don't understand how it went. The leviathans would just blitz and destroy and move forward, our men behind them. Yet the humans in defensive positions did not flee; they remained to interdict our warriors, even now cut off from their own lines. The humans fought with suicidal bravery. But by now all our Warriors had a measure of how to fight them. We would have to allow the Humans open fire first but quickly found cover and would destroy their emplacements just as quickly.

Meanwhile the Leviathans surged forward like a sharp edge of a blade and our forces followed on. 'Cleaning up' the ground behind the Leviathans was slow. But steady progress was being made.

No, we were not worried when the Humans claimed air superiority. They simply had more fighters than us and their ships had better manoeuvrability. The Air wing was gone, but their air units had nothing that could impact the Leviathan. They had enough guns on it to effectively destroy any weapon before it hit.

No, we had never heard of Electromagnetic weapons before that battle. It's use stunned us. To see the giant Leviathans brought to a dead stop like that. All weapon systems dead. All guns rendered useless. Of course the Warlord considered THAT a reason to regroup, but he couldn't. By now the humans were attacking us not just at the front of the army but also at the rear. Human slow suppression aircraft had made their way around the battle and had attacked our medical stations. They attacked our MEDICAL STATIONS!

Just... just give me a moment.

I'm fine. It upsets me is all... I'm fine. Where was I? Yes, the medical stations. The humans unleashed flame based weapons. They would fire their ordinances upon our reserve and then when that was gone, their pilots would fly their craft into our units to detonate upon impact.

We lost half our mechanized war machine regiment as it stood parked ready for deployment. They destroyed ammunition dumps back at the landing site. The Entire Army was now engaged.

Understand by this stage? Our entire army was deployed out in a battle formation five whole *G'Ruck* long and two *G'Ruck* wide and the Humans were attacking us everywhere.

The Warlord saw this and did the ONLY thing he could. He brought forward the Division of *Steel Resolve*. It was led by Scar Master, IckTra. IckTra was his rival; the only Warrior Caste who we thought could ever replace him. I remember their meeting. Around us explosions and occasional sniper fire. The Warlord, never once cowering, almost begging the Humans to make him a target. He explained his plan to IckTra. And IckTra, he saw its brilliance at once.

A whole division, on foot, 7,000 warriors, to charge. To just be a mass of bodies. To use our speed and natural abilities. No matter what the Humans had planned, that would be beyond them. It would be too large for mine fields to kill all. Too many for snipers to shoot all. We would act like lava- unrelenting and unstoppable.

Yes, both the Warlord and IckTra knew what the losses would be. But we had to regain the momentum of the battle. Our only alternative was to cower and be taken apart by the humans. Boldness was the only option.

The Warlord, he insisted he lead the charge. IckTra relented, but insisted that HE take the lead and the Warlord remain deep in the scrum of bodies. I remember his words to the Warlord- "When *Steel Resolve* reaches that human fortress, you just be there to lead us to avenge our fallen."

The Warlord saw the wisdom. What? Of course I went with him! That was my place. By his side. The order was given. Understand the whole army was ordered to surge forward. *Steel/ Resolve* just went faster and with utter cold fury.

What can I say? More minefields cleared by Warriors using themselves to clear a path. Fleets of auto drones rising out of the ground, literally thousands of them, firing automatic guns before charging our lines and shooting at us. Air units launching rocket after rocket at us before diving into our lines. Hidden defensive positions ambushing whatever they saw before we destroyed them. Then their version of war machines appeared and opened fire. The army took it. The army would NOT be stopped. We paid the blood price. We extracted the blood price.

Eventually we reach Scott Station.

IckTra was dead. The Warlord was with the remains of the Division of *Cold Resolve*. We surged the gates and burst in.

The humans had apparently thrown everything into defending the territory to this place; there was no one left to defend it; we took the military station quickly.

And it was then that I saw him break. The Warlord. I saw his spirit break before me.

What we discovered. It broke him. I saw it in his eyes. Violence is a language you see. There is a purity to it. A simplicity. Warriors speak the poetry of war. And as the Warlord gazed down at the body of the human commander, his body riddled with slugs from our guns, he finally deciphered what the humans were saying.

And it broke him.

It was immediately after the Battle that he not only halted the advance but sent the communique back to Home World that The Union was to surrender at once.

It was not an act of cowardice, it was an act of realism!

Don't you DARE judge him like that! He saw at that moment what it took you a full year to realise. We surrendered didn't we? We lost the war, did we not? And the Warlord saw it after that first battle, and it took you what? Another seventy battles or so before you realised he was right! HE WAS RIGHT!

That battle. That single opening battle. We had lost 7,700 warriors. Nearly 8,000 killed. And 23,000 injured.

And the humans had lost ONE.

Their entire battle force had been automated; lethal automated machines. All ran from a single station. It's why their air units could maneuver so rapidly- there was no pilot contending with the forces of gravity in charge. Why did they not run away... there was no one TO run away. We had been fighting and it had been bloody. We had thought at least we had killed hundreds of the humans. Maybe thousands. And there, at that moment we saw we had killed one. Just one.

Their message to us, which the Warlord saw at that moment, was that we would NEVER face an army of them. We would only ever face them in ones and twos. But each Human was able to deploy an army by themselves. The Warlord understood. This is why he said we should surrender. He saw the war as it was going to happen.

But you didn't listen. None of you did. And over a million of us have died. And we still lost.

You executed him for telling the truth. You called him a coward. You blamed him for the losses. Said he was incompetent. Forbade him from speaking out. Appointed lesser Warriors to lead us. Silenced all of us who worked with him. Stationed me on Jumalleo! Oh I got to watch as you lied about casualties. Proclaimed victories to hide the fact you were sending more and more to die.

Saw you launch our fleet in a desperate attempt to distract the humans. One million dead. And the humans lost what? Oh yes, millions of their machines. But how many Humans died? HOW MANY HUMANS DIED? ADMIT IT!

Less than 300. That includes civilians doesn't it?

The language of violence is simple. You use violence to tell your opponent that they should not fight you. You use violence to hurt your foe so he understands that to attack you is folly. Violence isn't a thing unto itself. It is a primal and universal means of communication that transcends all species in this galaxy.

The Humans told us that day via violence what was to come. Their machines meant they could and would inflict something primal and horrendous upon us. That THEY understood violence better than we ever did. That they had discarded distracting ideas like bravery and honour- they had stripped out the individual from war; and without living beings having to fight suddenly ideas and concepts used to soften the impact of violence or to glorify violence or how we even spoke of violence were removed.

Stripped it down to its bare bones, bereft of all the trappings of a civilization. When they learned to remove themselves from war they suddenly saw no need for adornment and hyperbole.

War is violence. And violence is a language. Shorn of everything, all war is murder is it not Scholar? The humans as a species simply recognised this and created machines that allowed them murder their foes. No pride in military traditions, no parades, no need for an army even. Just one trained operator... one trained murderer and their instruments of death. You can't 'win' a war against such things.

Our men were screaming and shouting and strategizing and being heroic and they had one operator who might as well be staring at us under a microscope. Like a game. Simple mathematics.

The Humans understood how to use violence in a way we do not. It is an absolute. Brutal.

Only The Warlord could grasp this back then. And he understood. After that one battle, he understood. And you killed him for telling you the message you finally got after you sacrificed a million of us.

Even now you don't listen. The war is over and you interview me to learn what we could do better 'next time'. The Scholar Caste talks of getting ready to overcome the humans if we ever fight again. Don't you understand? Did you not listen?

Do you think they will be standing still? They learned how we fight. They have seen us. Each battle we lost we were talking to them also. Showing them how we think. They will be ready for us if we try again. They too will adjust. Adapt. Learn. Change the mathematical variables.

The language of violence is two way communication, and you can't erase what they have learned.

With respect? I don't care about your protocols. I would resign in disgust but there is no purpose for a Warrior Caste away from being a Warrior. So I will obey any order you get my commanders to give me. But know this Scholar's... I hold you all in utter contempt. You lie with all you say and go. At least the humans are honest... brutal, murderous and cold, yes.

But they are honest.

Monsters? Do you still fail to understand? Humans are not monsters. They hate war. Only a species who hates war would create such a way of fighting. Create a way of violence that doesn't justify itself. Doesn't allow ego or pride. It's cold and methodical. They hold war in cold contempt. A function. A means to an end.

When they speak to us, they speak to us with a cold purity. That purity will mean we can't win. We have an entire Warrior Caste. They have removed the ideas of warriors from their civilization. We speak violence but via a translator. They speak it pure.

They speak it pure.